



Kennecott to the “Knoll”

Access: Begins as Root Glacier Trail, Kennecott Mill Town

Distance: Approximately 16-18 miles round trip

Time: 2-4 days

Maps: USGS Maps-McCarthy C-5, C-6, B-6 1:63,360;

Difficulty: Moderate. First five miles are on trail. Remainder is very rugged: rocky, glacial ice, some steep hiking to an open tundra area (the knoll).

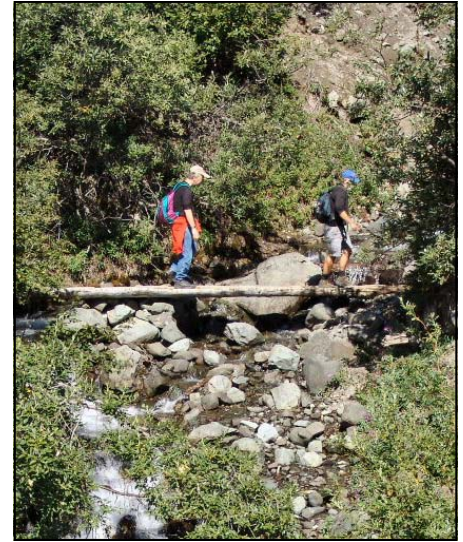
Highlights: Spectacular Views, Glaciers, Icefall, Geology

Note: Proper food storage is required. Bear Resistant Food Containers are available from park visitor centers. To hike to the knoll in one day makes for an extremely long day.

Route:

The trail begins on the north end of the ghost town of Kennecott, as a gravel wagon road that once led to the Erie Mine (approximately 4 miles along the Root Glacier Trail). The trail crosses Bonanza Creek after 1/2 mile. After 1 mile you will cross Jumbo Creek on a small footbridge. Once across, the trail becomes a single path following the top of the lateral moraine. Another mile down the trail you will cross the dry outwash plain of Amazon Creek. Depending on recent rainfall levels, Amazon Creek may be flowing above ground.

The trail continues slightly uphill as you cross the stream bed. The trail continues in and out of the brush and along the top of the moraine again. The trail will continue until it is cut off by a very steep rock slide. It is very difficult and dangerous to try and climb down here to continue hiking. A much safer route is to climb down off the trail before you reach the area below the Erie Mine. The area below the Erie Mine is marked by a cable that comes off the mountain to the trail's edge. If you get this far you may want to backtrack to find a safer route down the steep wall carved by the glacier. There are a couple good spots to make this transition from the trail about one mile down from Amazon Creek.



Crossing Jumbo Creek



View of Root Glacier, Donoho Peak, and Mt. Blackburn

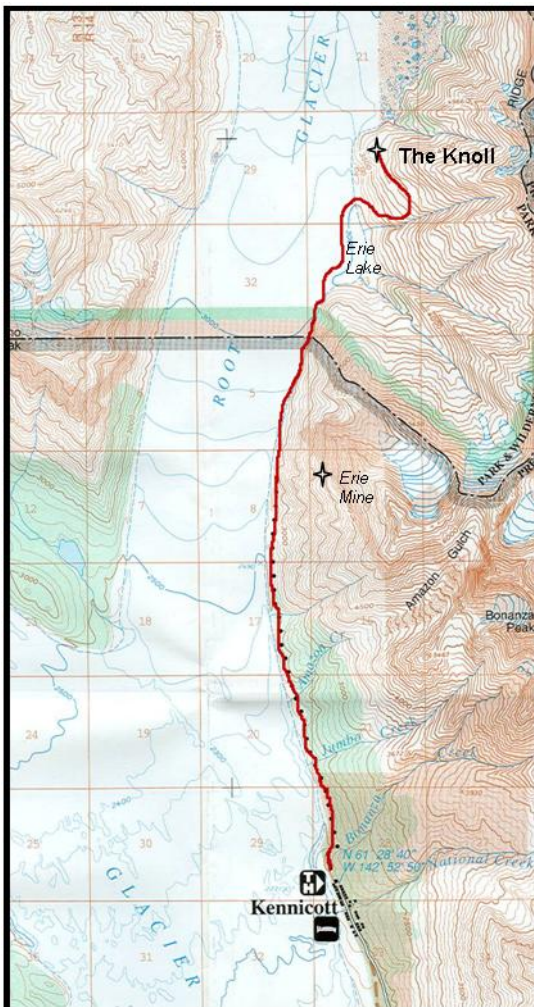


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Once down along the glacier, below the steep ridge, you can follow the trough that has been formed between the glacier ice and the lateral moraine. It is rocky and uncomfortable hiking but avoids a dangerous descent off the trail a mile farther down. After approximately 2 miles you will need to hike on glacier ice. The glacier here is referred to as being "dry" since the winter snow melts off by the first of May. The crevasses are exposed. It is relatively flat and is possible to hike without crampons, but you may wish to carry crampons for extra safety.



Stairway Icefall



The glacier has formed a joukaloup (glacial dammed lake) to your right (east). You will want to bike around “Erie Lake” on the ice several hundred yards to the left of the lake. It generally drains by late-June and has numerous large icebergs beached in the basin.

As you cross the glacier, you will be heading back over to the land on the other side of the lake. Diagonal across the rock covered portion of the glacier to reach the lateral moraine. You will be hiking up the brushy hillside just to the left of the lake/basin. Your final destination will be the top of the small waterfall on your left. It gets extremely brushy at the top of the waterfall, so take your time. From the top of the waterfall, hike up the stream watching for the trail on the left hand side of the water. The trail leads to an area suitable for camping on top of the “knoll,” elevation 3,800’. This is a beautiful spot which offers one of the best views of the Stairway Icefall.

Your route back is to retrace your steps. This is an excellent area to spend an extra day or two for exploring. Be aware that if you try to hike the entire distance to the knoll in one day, it makes for an extremely long day.

